

4998

A SERMON

by Mr. *Oldfield* for the

Reformation of Manners.

A SERMON



Reformation of Manners

Christ the Head of Civil Government.

A
SERMON
•Preach'd Novemb. 13. 1699,
AND
Now made Publick,
At the Desire
OF THE
SOCIETIES
FOR
Reformation of Manners,
IN
London and Westminster.

By Joshua Oldfield, V. D. M.

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149

TO THE
Right Honourable
S^{R.} *Richard Levett, Kt.*
Lord Mayor
OF THE
City of London.

My LORD,

THE Nature, and Design of what
is here Humbly render'd to your
Lordship's View, must be my Apo-
logy for this Dedication. Which
I make not upon my own Personal In-
terest, or from any Private Aim; but on
the Account of our Common Lord, and for
promoting the Common Good, in his Hand,
by whom Kings reign, and Princes de-
cree Justice. Christian Magistrates will
surely

The Dedication.

surely Accept it, as a Character of highest Honour, and Authority, that they are the Civil Ministers of our Saviour's most Benign, yet not less Awful Government.

oldsworn King
'TIS a most Illustrious jewel in the Crown of our Rightful and Gracious Sovereign, King William, that in such Singular Regards he reigns by that King of Kings, as England's, and indeed Europe's Deliverer, under the Redeemer of the World. The Liberties of his People, and Peace of Christendom have been, thro' the Merit of our Saviour's Inestimable Death, procur'd by the most apparent, and repeated Hazard of a Life so highly valuable. He hath signaliz'd himself as the Strenuous Afferter, and more than Titular Defender of the Reformed Faith; settling it (without Coercion) upon Judgment and Choice, as its proper Basis: Yet, by his Patronage, inviting Some to maintain it against contrary Principles: and Others to secure it against repugnant Practices. Briefly, his Government is indeed Paternal, and like that of our Redeemer, an Exercise of Mercy, even in the Execution of Justice.

UNDER a King, so truly Christian,
your

The Dedication

your Lordship holds the Sword. Your Ac-
tivation so farre high an Authority, created no more
than Common Joy to all Good Men. Your
just, and prudent Management of so great
a Trust will not only be the Security, Hap-
piness, and Glory of this Renowned City;
but will derive a like kindly Influence upon
those lesser Bodies, which, seeing in the
Fet of their Great Metropolis, shall from
her Example draw both Measures, and
Spirit, for the Conduct of themselves in
the most Important Affair of Publick Re-
formation.

OF this your Lordship is known to have
been already, in a somewhat lower, but more
lasting Capacity, an Active and Generous
Patron. And it is justly to be presum'd,
that in this larger, and higher Sphere, your
Zeal for so Noble a Design will be no less
Vigorous, but more Extensive. May the
following Discourse serve yet farther to Con-
firm, and to Conduct it by the Steadiest
Influence of the great Reformer, and for
his highest Honour, in Man's Compleat Fe-
licity. That we lose not those Things,
which we have wrought, but that we
receive a full Reward; not only Riches
and Honour from the Left hand of Wis-
dom,

The Dedication.

done, but also from the Right, Durable
Riches and Righteousness, with Length
of Days, for ever and ever.

THAT thus, in relation to both Worlds,
your Lordship may be Bless'd, and Thou-
sands more, by the Means of your Good
Government, is the most Sincere and Fervent
Prayer of,

My LORD,

Your. Lordship's

Most Humble,

Most Obedient,

and

Devoted Servant,

Josh. Oldfield.

ERRATA.

Pag. 31. line 19. after as well read as. p. 38. l. 2. for here
r. there. l. 13: for upon. r. up. l. ult. for Wisdom. r.
Wisdom. p. 61. l. 26. for publick. r. publickly.

A.

SERMON

Preach'd before the

SOCIETIES

FOR

Reformation of Manners.

PROV. VIII. 15.

*By me Kings reign, and Princes decree
Justice.*

IF good Laws against ill Manners be, as sure they are, Decrees of Justice; these Kings and Princes, with inferior Magistrates, will be the Governing Societies, here on Earth, for Publick Reformation: A Work that did ever highly deserve, and now most apparently needs, the subservient Help of such Societies,

cieties, as those before whom I speak. And as the best Assistance of the best Subjects may be herein reasonably expected, so it is like to be most easily, and effectually engaged, when Civil Rulers shall be consider'd, as subordinate to that ever-blessed Society of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit above, the One God, who, through the one Mediator betwixt God and Man, hath graciously vouchsaf'd to concern himself for the Reformation of a degenerate World, that Iniquity might not be, at least so speedily, or universally, its Ruine.

THOSE Excellent Instructions of Divine Wisdom, which we may find from Chap. 10. generally distilling in single, unconnected Sentences, have hitherto flow'd in a more continued Sence. 'Tis not my Business now, nor have we leisure here to trace the various Turns, and Windings of its Course; wherein it is at once steadily pursuing the General End of making Men wise unto Salvation, and also serving many Noble, and Useful Purposes by the Way; even as a River that waers the Land far and wide, while it is making to the Sea. But the particular Passage before us, is indeed more than enough for

for the short Line of my Time, and Thought.

AS to the Wisdom, nam'd in the Context, and plainly referr'd to in my Text, there is a Concurrence of approv'd Interpreters, not only Christian, but Jewish too, for its being the Eternal, Only begotten Son of God. 'Tis true indeed, the Sex and Gender here us'd, (as v. 1, 2, 3.) with some particular Expressions, are of a less Obvious Reference to Him, and might seem utterly disagreeing; but may we not very reasonably conceive them to be made use of designedly as a Veil, proper for the Time of the Law, and for other Purposes best known to Wisdom it self? Yet in other respects, (as in the 22, 24, 25, 30, and 31 *verses*, which can scarce be wrested to another Sense) the Veil is enough transparent, and the Person discernible, however by the Light of the Gospel, where Wisdom, in the Phrase of *Solomon*, seems to be render'd (but with a higher signification) by the ~~Light~~, in that of St. *John*, and to shine forth more clearly in that **LIGHT**: Both were *in the Beginning*, v. 22, 23. *John* 1. 12. Both *with God*, v. 30. *John*

1. 2. and Both with Men, v. 15, 16, 31.
John 1. 4, 9, 10, 14.

YET, whilst I understand my Text of the *Personal Wisdom* with God; I desire it may be particularly remarked, that I am far from excluding the *Perfection of Wisdom* in God; or any *Communication* of it from Him: The former being imply'd, as the Light in the Sun of Righteousness, and the latter connoted, as the Beams which issue from it. Nor do I undertake to determine, whether *Solomon* himself meant more than these; 'tis sufficient, if the *Spirit of Christ* in him had a farther Reach, tho' to him unknown; since probably (as the *Apostle* speaks) *he ministered not to himself, (or to those under that Dispensation,) but unto us the things, which are now reported by them, who have preached the Gospel.*

1 Pet. 1. 11, 12.

NOW this *Wisdom*, as it hath more, than all the *Strength* and *Constancy* of the one *Sex*; so does it likewise, in *Tenderness* and *Attractive Graces*, far surpass the other; and is here represented as a mighty *Princess*, who with the most *Compassionate Condescension*, yet with a *Becoming Majesty*; addresseth her self

to

to recover lost Men, from the destructive Enchantments of that strange Woman ; *Chap. 7.* (mystically the World, led on by the Devil, and follow'd by the Flesh) and to recall them to that Natural Allegiance to Her self, which is so much their Interest, as well as Duty.

IN Order to this, among many other Inducements, she gives us to know, that even our Kings and Princes owe Homage to Her, and that She is at the Head of all, who so *exercise Authority*, as to be fitly called *Benefactors*.

ALL I can propose to my self, from so great a Subject, is only to draw out somewhat to promote Reformation, of Minds and Principles ; if it may be, as what would most effectually produce that of Practice and Manners ; or at least, that *this* may be attained, if *that* cannot. For which Purpose, I shall thus form the nearer Argument of the Ensuing Discourse.

Civil Government, especially in its Tendency to Publick Reformation (with the Common Safety and Happiness) has a more immediate and special Dependance on the Son of God, the Re-forming, Saving Wisdom.

THIS is, for the main, only a Branch of that Comprehensive General, which from *John 5. 22.* has been laid before you by a very Skillful and Kind Hand, which more than supply'd the Service, from which I was providentially withheld. My Province is happily narrow'd, and yet how greatly, how very sensibly, do I need the Conduct, and Aid even of that Wisdom, whereof I am to speak; that I miss not my Way, that I fail not a Work of so Publick and High Importance!

SOMEWHAT I shall Offer,

I. OR the Tendency of Civil Government to Publick Reformation, in which the Common Safety, and Happiness is so manifestly concerned.

II. OF the Son of God, the Reforming, Saving Wisdom, on whom that Government depends.

III. OF the more Immediate, and Special Dependance it has on Him. And so shall proceed to Application.

AS to the First, that I may shorten my Work what I can, I shall not Offer

at any Critical Observations, or Curious Enquiries about the *Princes*, *Nobles* and *Judges* of the Context, or the *Kings* and *Princes* of the Text; whether they are design'd to signify various kinds of Government, or only distinct parts of that particular Form, which had most obtain'd in the World, as being the most famous Instance, and which indeed comes nearest to the Divine; when Kings reign by Decrees of Justice, and those Gods on Earth resemble the God of Heaven. And may not the Phrase of the Text, in Accommodation to our English Monarchy, and Stile, admit of such a Turn as this, *By the Grace of God Kings reign, and with their Parliaments enact good Laws.*

NOW the very decreeing of Justice, or the Justice in good and wholesom Laws decreed, has a natural and evident Tendency to Publick Reformation. with all its implied and consequent Advantages. 'Tis certain, that ill Manners have given the Occasion to many good Laws, which tho' they serv'd to Direct, and Confirm the Good, yet are principally designed to Correct, and Reform the Bad. And in this respect it may be said of

Man's Law, as of God's, that it is not made for a Righteous Man, but for the Lawless, and Disobedient, for the Ungodly and for Sinners, for the Unholy and Profane, 1. Tim. 1. 9. that even such, as well as others, may be brought to Render to all their Dues ; Tribute to whom Tribute is due, Custom to whom Custom, Fear to whom Fear, Honour to whom Honour. Rom. 13. 7.

YET Justice (as well as Wisdom) requires, that Rational Minds be treated agreeably to their Nature ; and it were a manifest Wrong (as well as Weakness) to attempt, either their Instruction, or Government by meer Compulsion : Therefore all fit Methods of dealing with Men, as such, must take hold of Some Principles, either before Allow'd us, or which at least may be fairly Presum'd, as those of Common and Obvious Reason must, tho' they should not be Confess'd ; and to Deny them, were an injurious Reflection cast on Humane Nature, if not on it's Author, and worthy of a Check : Wheras less obvious Points of Reason, and Matters of pure Revelation, must first be Entertain'd upon their own proper Evidence, before they should be rigorously press'd by humane Laws, tho'

no doubt they may be guarded against Open Contempt ; and the Publick Safety must certainly be provided for against whatsoever Principle, or Pretence. But the great Business of good Laws, will be more effectually to repress, the Overt Acts of those vicious Inclinations ; which so often lead Men, in particular Cases, contrary to the general Dictates of their own deliberate Judgment, and Conscience.

AND the Tendency of such Laws towards Publick Reformation will yet more particularly appear, if we shall consider their Matter and Measures in some of the principal Decrees of Justice : As,

1. *TO God* : That he be not Openly affronted, by the profane Deniall of his Being, contemptuous Neglects of evident Duty, or daring Commission of notorious Sin. To this may be added, That the Civil Magistrate may, and ought, by all proper, and lawful means to promote ; what in his Judgment and Conscience, upon the utmost Enquiry, he shall think most conducive to the highest Interests of Religion ; as particularly, in the careful Providing, and honourable Support of able and faithful Guides, and Obliging

Obliging them to the just Discharge of acknowledged Duty. Thus he will have a very large Sphere of Activity for God, without invading his more immediate Province of Conscience, in Pretence of Service to him.

2. *TO the Community*: That Private Interests give way to that of the Publick, estimated by the most impartial Judges, and upon the most comprehensive View. That uncontrouled Vice be not suffer'd to Damage, Endanger or Disquiet it. That it be not made a Property, not bought and Sold.

3. *TO the Magistrate*: Whatsoever needfull Defence, with a Power Sufficient for the asserting his just Authority: A more constant Support becoming his Place and Dignity, with occasional Supplies answerable to Emergencies: And finally all fit Homage, and requisite Assistance.

4. *TO Subjects more generally consider'd*: The Saving, and Securing to them those Rights and Liberties, which are due, whether by Common Reason, or the Particular Constitution, and Fundamental Contract: As in our own case, those of Men, of English-men, of Christi-

ans, and of Protestants : And among their other Rights, we cannot but reckon a Liberty of Conscience, in matters consistent with the Common Safety and Peace, as one of the chief ; and do most thankfully accept from God, and the present Government that we now by Law enjoy.

5. *TO the Poor* : That the Disabled and Destitute be Maintain'd. That the Able and Willing want not Work ; nor the Idle a Spur to Labour.

6. *TO Offenders themselves* : That the justly Obnoxious go not unpunish'd, nor yet their Punishment outweigh the Offence ; and where it may be with Security to the Publick, that it should be adapted rather to Reclaim, than Ruine.

AND it is Humbly submitted to the Wisdom of our Lawgivers, Whether in some Cases, Lives might not be more Equitably, and to a more Publick Advantage spar'd, yea, Souls more probably sav'd, and the Crimes themselves more effectually prevented by the Dread of Servile Labour, and Hard Usage, than by that of Death it self upon Atheistical, Idle, and Luxurious Minds ? And which I reckon not the least, whilst I name it last.

7. *TO*

7. *TO Persons of Merit* : Whether by their Qualifications, and Endowments for Publick Service, or for some Notable Service already done. Honour, and other Rewards, are surely a Point of Justice due to such ; nor can the Marks of Publick Esteem, be any where more fitly plac'd, than on those ; who with a generous Prudence decline other Advantages, least they should clog their Pursuit of a general Good.

NOW are not such Decrees of Justice, a Publick Testimony for Virtuous Actions, and against the contrary Vices ? Are they not a most conspicuous Mark of Honour, upon Piety and Goodness ; a most visible Brand of Infamy, upon Profaneness and Wickedness ? Are they not plainly a Sentence of Condemnation, with greatest Solemnity pass'd, upon the Bad ; and as Publick Letters of Commendation, to the Good ; such as must be known, and may be *read of all Men* ? Letters of highest Authority, most deliberately consider'd, and sign'd by the Greatest, Wildest, and Best ; and if among these, by some of the Worst ; 'tis a Testimony for Virtue so much the more considerable, as being that of Enemies ; extorted from them

them by the force of Reason, and Conscience even against themselves. Upon the whole, doth not *Wisdom*, in such kind of Edicts, cry, and Understanding put forth her Voice? She standeth in the top of high Places, by the Way in the Places of the Paths (as it were proclaiming thole Decrees) yea, she crieth at the Gates, at the Entry of the City. — Unto you, O Men, I call, and my Voice is to the Sons of Men. O ye Simple understand *Wisdom*, and ye Fools be ye of an Understanding Heart. Hear, for I will speak of Excellent Things, &c. v. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, &c. It might be read *Princely Things*, such as the Decrees of Justice in my Text.

AND whilst the Preceptive Part of such Decrees, recommends Virtuous Actions to the Understanding; their Sanctions of Reward and Punishment, most fully serve to press them on the Will; as powerfully moving those two great Springs of Humane Action, Hope and Fear; Exciting and Improving the Sence of Honour and of Shame, of Loss and Pain; touching the more hardened Minds in that, which is, perhaps, their only Tender and Sensible Part, the Love of this World, and its present Good, dearer than

than their Souls, and more desir'd than Heaven. Thus even dangerous Principles are over-rul'd, to assist towards the Reforming of dissolute Manners, and the Tempter's great Engine so far turn'd upon himself.

BUT there is yet a much nearer, and more efficacious Tendency of Civil Government to Publick Reformation in the Execution of just Decrees. By this the Testimony mention'd is kept alive, when-as neglected Laws are buried in Oblivion, as if no such thing had ever been, or perhaps trampled upon with contemptuous Disdain. On the contrary, Execution gives a Standing and Open Confirmation to them, as being the abiding Sence of our Rulers, and those perhaps in a distant Succession from the Princes, who first decreed them ; so that they appear to have been well weighed, and wisely resolved. Must they not then strike the Mind with a stronger, and more convincing Light ? And will not the repeated Instances of their yet Living Force revive, and raise Languishing Hopes ; startle and rowse up Sleepy Fears ? Will not fresh Scenes of Loss and Shame, of Misery and Death, visibly pursuing Vice, quicken

quicken our Flight from so Destructive an Evil? And when we see Magistrates with Ministers, Great and Good Men, tho' otherwise differing, joyn their united Force against it, as a Common Enemy; who but must think of falling in? So clear is the Tendency of just Laws in Vigorous Execution to Common Reformation, that 'tis then most happily begun, and in the most hopeful way to proceed. I might here shew, how the Common Safety and Happiness stand inseperably join'd with it, both by the settled Nature of things, and the Unchangeable Ordination of God. But this has been sufficiently done by Others on the like Occasion: Nor does it fall so directly in my Way. Therefore to proceed,

II. TO the Consideration of that Reforming, Saving *Wisdom*, by whom Kings reign, and Princes decree Justice, *The Son of God*, into whose Name, together with that of the *Father*, and the *Holy Spirit*, we have been Baptiz'd, and thereby solemnly engag'd, as his Disciples, to Learn, and observe all things, whatsoever he hath commanded, or given in charge for us, *Mat. 28. 19.*

THIS

THIS Son of God, however he be distinguish'd from the Father, and the Spirit ; is yet so far, even Intelligibly, One with them ; that there is an Exact, and Unalterable Agreement of Apprehension, Inclination, and Interest among them ; so as there never was, or can be any Schism, or Division : I am far from saying, or thinking ; that this is the whole of their Unity, or that it is the very thing it self, *as in God* : For I pretend not, *By searching, to find out the Almighty to Perfection*. I do easily grant, that there is somewhat more Fundamental, that lies yet deeper, and in the dark to us. But what if so much, as I have offer'd, may serve to direct those Affectionate, and Practical Regards to the Father, Son, and Spirit ; which are much more our Concernment with them, than any Niceties of Speculation about them. And if in every Creature there is a Hidden Substance, the more inward Support of what appears to us ; what Wonder, that the Creator should be so superficially known to us ? We are forc'd in reference to Finite Beings, after the Enquiries of so many successive Ages, to reckon it a very Competent Pitch of Know-

Knowledge, that may but tolerably guide us in the Value and Use of things; why should we despise, and reject like Notices of the Infinite and Invisible God? And now, 'tis certain, while I have such (tho' confessedly imperfect) Apprehensions of the Divine Unity, I cannot be fairly charg'd with *Nonsense*; as if I held a Word without a Meaning, or that the Meaning affix'd, were utterly Arbitrary or Insufficient: Nor yet can a *Contradiction* be fasten'd upon me, whilst I presume not Formally to state either the Difference on one hand, or Unity on the other *as in God*; But am only attempting so far towards it, as I can discern my way, and may safely wade in this great Deep, and as may, I hope, be Sufficient to direct my course towards God.

The like Method I would take, in giving some very brief Account, more particularly, of the *Son*; a Term taken from amongst Men, which tho' I cannot exactly agree to him, who is the Son of God; yet certainly intends, to lead us to some such Apprehensions about him, as may be allow'd to our Weakness, and will be sufficient for our Purpose.

As now for Instance, That he has Divine Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, as well as the Father; even as among Men, what is Essential to him, who is the Father; is also found in him, who is the Son: Thus he is said to be the *ανωγεια*, or (reflected) Brightness of his Father's Glory, Heb. 1. 3. Besides it imports, that yet he is not the Father; but some way so distinguish'd, as to be capable of the different Attributions, given to him alone in Scripture: Thus the Son is said to Judge, and not the Father; John 5. 22. Again, the Son, not the Father, hath assum'd our Nature, and espous'd our Cause, Interposing that Nature, in its Union with himself, betwixt a provoked God, and obnoxious Man, that as our Shield he might receive upon himself, and break off from us the Insupportable Stroke. And yet again, that what Likeness soever there is to the Father, he has from him, and is some way a Resultance from his Nature; as a Son among Men is not a work of Art, but the Production of humane Nature. Thus this Wisdom was brought forth before the Earth was made, v. 24, 25, 26. and his Glory such as of the Only

Begotten of the Father; John i. 14. That after all, He is not as the Sons of Men, an Arbitrary, or Accidental Production, but Necessarily flowing; yet with full Concurrence of Will, from the Divine Nature of the Father.

THE Name or Character of *Wisdom* may perhaps insinuate, that the Son of God is, more peculiarly, the Natural Resistance of the Divine Wisdom, fully Representing God; the *Image* (as he is called, Coloss. i. 15.) of the Invisible God; who being by the mighty Energy, and Force of the Infinite Mind so Form'd, and Conceive'd as the Internal *Logos*, or Word expressing God to Himself, *say* Originally, in the bosom of the Father, John i. 18. yet even there, in a Sort brought forth to the Father's Complacential View, Being daily *his delight*, and *Rejoycing always before him*, V. 24, 25, 30.

THUS did he Eternally Represent the Father to himself, as also in Time, he is the Wisdom declaring God, in the Work of Creation, and to the Intelligent Creature; especially in the Matter of Redemption. All those things were made

by him, John 1. 3. in which the Invisible things of God are clearly Seen; Rom. 1. 20. No Man has seen God at any time, the Only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him; John 1. 18. And though Jesus Christ, by whom God created all things, is to be made known unto the Principalities and Powers in Heavenly Places, by the Church, the manifold Wisdom of God, Eph. 3. 9. 10. Thus is he the Wisdom, that discovers God by his Spirit in the Prophets, 1 Pet. 1. 11; By himself as the ~~Alpha~~, but especially, when this Word was made Flesh and dwelt among us, declaring to men the whole Council of God, so far as requisite for their Salvation.

NOW the Salvation of Men is every where in Sacred Writ, represented as the great Design and Business of this Wisdom; whom therefore *Whoso findeth findeth Life*; and shall obtain Favour of the Lord. But he that sinneth against Her wrongeth his own Soul; all they that have Her, love Death: v. 35, 36. The Living God is, by his Son, the Saviour of all Men especially of those that believe; 1 Tim. 4. 10. Men singly considered are capable not only of Temporal Salvation, but Eternal

when

whenas this belongs not to Societies as such, for so they are but of a Temporary Make; and their particular Members may in the other World, be sever'd as far as Heaven from Hell tho' here they must Ordinarily, and for the Generality of them, stand or fall, suffer or prosper together.

But certainly, *Wisdom* well knows that the Uncontroll'd *Pride* and *Arrogancy*, and the *Evil Way*, and the *Froward Mouth* she so justly hates, will never comport with the *Peace* and *Welfare* of Men, either in their Single or Social Capacity. She therefore leads in the way of *Righteousness*, in the midst of the paths of *Judgment*, that she may cause those that love her to inherit *Substance*, and may fill their *Treasures*; For this is scarce naturally possible, where *Pride*, and *Fulness of Bread*, and *Abundance of Idleness* prevail. Nay, tho' the Poor be pinch'd, for the leaving an *Inheritance* or filling our *Treasures*, the Society will it self grow *Poor*. Those other Sins of *Sodom*, are indeed too chargeable to be maintain'd, tho' with the Help of this. The whole Kind of Sin must finally die, that Souls may eternally live; and some sorts

however must be, at least, outwardly suppress'd, that Societies may thrive and flourish. Nor, is this no make Men Hypocrites ; but indeed to bring them so much nearer the Truth, of what they pretend to as Christians, or Persons of Honour, Men of Reason, or at least of Common Sence : And it may prove a means, of making them sometime Christians indeed ; as it tends to dispose their Minds towards Thinking on their Ways, and returning their feet to God's Testimonies ; yet presseth them to make haste, and thus delay to keep his Commandments. *Psal. 131. 9. 59, 60.*

AND farther, this Wisdom can't be suppos'd to design or attempt Man's Salvation ; but in a Way worthy of God, and agreeably to the Measures eternally concert'd. And here may we not conceive the Father (as highly provok'd, yet willing to spare in a becoming way) to withdraw his more immediate Government from a Rebellious World, render'd by Sin incapable of that Beneficent Justice, which would have rewarded Man's entire Obedience, with a more than Royal Bounty ? Whenas, if he would now rule according to the first Constitution,

rtion, his Government will be that of a Consuming Fire over Briars and Thorns: Therefore it pleas'd the Father, to commit all Judgment to the Son; that he might administer Affairs in a way of Sovereign Grace, yet directed by the most exact Wisdom, and guarded by Rectoral Justice. A Justice not less sure, tho' it be more slow, as waiting Men's Repentance and Amendment; but falling far heavier at last on the finally impenitent. In the mean while, the Father will not speak to Sinners, nor hear from them, but thro' the Son as Mediator; will not receive any Service, nor confer any Favour, but by his Hand; nor yet may He at last present any of them otherwise than Faultless, before the Presence of his Father's Glory, Jude 24. In short, his Government as Mediator to be founded in Redemption, and exercis'd in a Way of Reformation.

First, TO be founded in Redemption: The Father, for the Godhead, insuring upon such a Reparation of God's injured Honour, and Evidence of his Glorious Holiness (or God-like Sence of what became himself) that He, who would speak for Sinners; must die for them:

He that would interpose betwixt God and them, must suffer from both, not only be pierc'd by them, but bruis'd by him; as if the very Office of an Advocate for such, had drawn a kind of Guilt upon him. Thus was He to be a Priest upon his Throne, Zech. 6. 13. Redeeming us from the Curse of the Law, by being made a Curse for us; Gal. 3. 13. And therefore highly exalted, because he became Obedient unto Death, even the Death of the Cross, Phil. 2. 8, 9. And tho' this was not actually undergone, till the Fulness of Time, yet upon the Credit of his Undertaking, he was Eternally desigh'd to the Throne, and long before his dying, invested with the Office and Power of a Mediator.

Secondly, *MUST* be Exercis'd in a Way of Reformation: He was to Purifie to himself a peculiar People, zealous of good Works; Tit. 2. 14. To insist upon Exact Obedience, not indeed as at first for our Justification, but as being still God's just Demand; and we more strongly bound to answer it by fresh Ties both of Duty and Gratitude, on the Account of our Redemption; yet was He graciously to Accept of less than he Requires. Which I conceive to be, one distinguishing Character

acter of the Gospel : So that by our Saviour, and for his sake it is accepted, if there be first a (truly) willing Mind, according to what a Man hath, and not according to what he hath not.

THIS Work of Reformation in the Hand of Christ, is to be at last fully compleated in such, as shall be Eternally Sav'd! But He, who is so specially the Saviour of them that Believe, is also, as the Saviour of all men, to carry it more generally thro' the World, in some Sort or Degree, more or less. This Wisdom therefore was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world, and was in the world, even before he was manifested in the flesh, tho' the world knew him not ; John i. 9, 10. He made the Gentiles, a Law to themselves ; furnishing them with those Noble Principles of rectify'd Reason, which might serve as so many Stars of Heaven, to draw their Eyes that way ; and thence to look for some such Light to conduct them thither, as hath shone in the Church ; heretofore Fair as the Moon, now Clear as the Sun. And indeed our Saviour's whole Conduct in the World, especially in his Church, hath a mighty Tendency to promote

mote Reformation; whether we consider, the Goodness that leads unto Repentance; or those Mixtures of Severity, which in Reason should urge Men to it. And to begin here,

EVEN those Severities, which carry only the Face of Justice; have yet this Merciful Tendency. If God in Christ threaten, 'tis that he might not strike: If he smite with the Rod, 'tis that He may not be put to use the Ax; yea. If some be Cut down and cast into the Fire; 'tis that others should Hear and Fear, and do no more so wickedly. Thus Sodom and Gomorrha with the Cities about them, are set forth as an Example, suffering the Vengeance of Eternal Fire; Jude 7. And those things, which the Jews of old suffer'd for their Sins in the Wilderness, were Our Examples; to the Intent, that we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted; &c. 1 Cor. 10. 6, &c. and the later Generations of that People, On whom wrath is come to the uttermost (1 Thes. 2. 16.) are a standing Monument, to warn all the World about them, to serve the Lord with fear, — to kiss the Son least he be angry, and they perish from the way; Psal. 2. 11, 12. But,

2. WHILE

2. WHILE this World stands, the Instances of Divine Goodness do far out-number, and out-measure those even of a temper'd Severity ; and are all in a direct Tendency to win Men back to God, *who hath made himself without a Witness* of his gracious Inclinations ; nor Men without a Call and Encouragement to turn to him : In that he doth good, giving Rain from Heaven, and fruitful Seasons, filling their Hearts with Food and Gladness, Acts 14. 17. affording them Instruction by the Heavens, and Firmament, the Day, and Night, whose Line is gone out thro' all the Earth, and their *Words* to the End of the World, in a sort of Universal Character, to be Read by the Light of Reason, Psal. 16. 1, 2, 4. But then, how loud are our Calls, how singular our Encouragements ! To whom God hath also shewed his inspired *Word*, his *Statutes* and his *Judgments* ; Psal. 147. 19. and that in a much larger and fairer Edition, than to *Israel* of old : For we have not only *Moses* and the *Prophets*, but *Christ* and his *Apostles* dealing with us for our Amendment ; and this in our Native Tongue by faithful Interpreters, under the presiding Care of our more faithful *Redeemer*, who will

will not suffer those Fountains of Truth to be sealed up, or poison'd. Now here we have the unspeakable Benefit of those higher Decrees of Justice, which are to regulate the Minds of Men, as well as the Life. Forbidding us to make Gold our *Hope*, the *Belly* our *God*, or to allow to any Creature, what belongs to the Creator only ; who is to be Loved with all our Heart, with all our Soul, with all our Strength, with all our Mind, and our Neighbour as our selfe, Luke 10. 27. So that we may not practice, or so much as contrive any thing against his Life, Chastity, Estate or Good Name, nor even cover from him any thing that is his : Instead of this, *To love our very Enemies*, bless them that curse us, and do good to them that hate us, and pray for them which despitefully use and persecute us ; that we may be the Children of our Father, which is in Heaven ; — and perfect even as he is perfect ; Mat. 5. 44, &c. This great Pattern being brought down nearer to our Case, and visibly copied out in our Saviour's Compleat Example ; which we are provok'd, and encourag'd to imitate, by seeing how far Men of like Passions with our selves, have advanced, and that by like or lower Assistance, than what we do, or may enjoy.

For

For Thro' Jesus our Lord are given to us exceeding great and precious Promises, that by these we might be Partakers of a Divine Nature, having escaped the Corruption, that is in the World thro' Lust, &c. 2 Pet. 1. 3, 4. &c.

IN Short, Religion in a Degenerate World, is but another Name for Reformation (as might be shewn in its several Forms and Advances) especially the Christian, which was to correct, not only the Irreligion, but also the Superstitions of the World, Commanding all Men every where to repent of these, as well as that, Acts 17. 22. 30. Nor was it only to rectifie the Disorders, and Corruption of the Jewish Church; but even to raise its Constitution, making it more Spiritual and Manly, as first Leaving at Liberty (as appears Acts 15. 24.) and in due time removing the Meats and Drinks, and divers Washings, and Carnal Ordinances imposed till the time of Reformation; Heb. 9. 10. 'Tis true indeed the Mystery of Iniquity, more insensibly working even in the Apostle's Time, (2 Thes. 2. 7.) grew at length to a new Pontifex Maximus, or another High-Priest; and reduced the greatest part of the Christian World,

World, to the Servile Observance of divers Heathenish and Jewish Rites: But it pleased him, *By whom Kings reign, and Princes decree Justice*; to spirit our Rulers, at last to throw off the heavy Yoak of a foreign Jurisdiction, and our Excellent Reformers, to assert the Christian Liberty against Antichristian Tyranny; professedly aiming at the just Standard of Divine Revelation, and Scriptural Reason; and coming then, as near it, as the Rate of things would well admit. And,

Finally, IT has been the Care of our Gracious Redeemer, to recover the declining Reformation under the happy Influence of the present Government, and by the Subservient Help of these Societies. But I proceed;

III. TO say somewhat (and briefly) of the more Immediate and Special Dependance of Civil Government on the Son of God.

AND here 'tis true indeed, that our Saviour's *Kingdom is not of this World*, John 18. 36. nor of a Secular but Spiritual Nature, under its highest, and most peculiar Consideration, as it presides over Minds. It is not Set up, nor Carry'd on

on by outward Force; It comes not with Observation, nor is so much about us, as within us. The holy Spirit is its Supreme, and universal Agent; and the only *Viceroy* General Christ has on Earth; yet his Kingdom is in the World, his more Spiritual Subjects to be called out from it, some while kept in it, and finally carried through it. When therefore the Earth, and all the Inhabitants thereof are dissolved; He bears up the Pillars of it, By whom all things consist: Col. 1. 17. He is Head over all shins to his Church, Eph. 1. 22. But more especially he has Power given him over all Flesh, that He should give Eternal Life, so as many as the Father hath given him, John 17, 2. His Subjects here are Embodied Spirits, and have their Temporal as well Eternal Concernments: Our Lord is therefore also for the Body, 1 Cor. 6. 13. and the Matters even of this Life are a part of his Care, who has *Bought us Soul and Body with a price*. He has therefore, not only provided his Word and Ministers for our Salvation; but proper Medicines, and good Physicians for our Health and Life, being the *Lord that healeth us*; Exod. 15. 26. whether it be with them, or without; as also just

just Laws, and Persons therein Learned and Faithful for the securing of our Rights and Properties ; being Himself the Great Councillor and Advocate : And Finally, Good Magistrates to preside over all, under himself, who is the *Prince of the Kings of the Earth*, Rev. 1:5. who stand charg'd not only with the Estates and Lives of their People, but in a sort also with their Souls. And what does the Minister of God for Good (Rom. 13.4.) found less to Christian Ears, than that the Magistrate is indeed the *Civil Minister of Christ* ; thro' whom it is, that God does Good to the Evil, or to such as are but imperfectly Good ? Tho' 'tis certain, such a Title would have been taken for an Affront by Heathen Governors ; and therefore could not then with Decency or Prudence, have been otherwise put upon them, than in such a Covert Way of Speaking.

INDEED the Wisdom, of whom we speak, saw it utterly unsuitable to his state of Humiliation, and scarce consistent with his Undertaking on Earth to appear like himself, as *King of Kings* ; and that it was no part of his Commissionated Business here, to be so much

as a Judge or Divider of Inheritances, Luke 12. 14. Yet he doubted not, once in a very humble way, to shew himself as a King; Matt. 21. or to exercise even a Coercive Power, when having made a Scourge of small Cords, he drove the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple; doing at once the part of a Superior Governour, and Inferior Officer; this probably to cover that: But when question'd by what Authority he did those things, and who gave him this Authority, he refers the Chief Priests and Elders to the Baptism of John (Mat. 21. 23, 24, 25.) who had witnessed to his being the Lamb of God, that taketh away the Sins of the world John 1. 29. whereby our Lord seems fairly to insinuate, that as the Redeemer of the World, he claim'd even that Kind of Authority which he had exercis'd over those Profaners of the Temple: For it is not to be imagin'd, but the Enquiry made had an eye to that, at least amongst other things. 'Tis certain, the Redeemer of Israel was it's Ruler; Leading his People like a Flock by the hand of Moses, as well as Aaron; Psa. 77. 20; Governing them not only as a Church, but also as a Civil State.

or Common Wealth ; first by Judges, and after by Kings.

WHEN I speak of the more immediate Dependance of Civil Government on the Son of God ; I do not deny, but indeed suppose its Dependance upon God : Only I consider the Son as Mediator, to intervene betwixt God and Men ; and as such to stand in a nearer Relation to the several Agents, or Instruments of his Reforming and Saving Design. That therefore, as the Spirit is in this Respect more peculiarly his Spirit, and Ministers his Servants ; so Magistrates are also his Officers, and all to deal with Men in various Methods, for their Good. Now to the Civil, as well as Spiritual Means of Reformation, there is a full Concurrence of God the Father ; who therefore rules, but by the Mediator, as in his Church, so likewise in the Kingdoms of Men.

NOR are the People excluded, for whilst Government is under a more General Consideration, God's Ordinance ; Rom. 13. 2. yet in Particular, 'tis in some sort the Ordinance of Man, or *'an Humane Creature,* *Arthorini xlii.*, 1 Pet. 2. 13. For nothing is more evident, than that the particular Species, or Form of Government,

ment, the Person or Family governing, together with some Fundamental Measures of Administration are ordinarily determin'd, some way or other, by the People. And tho' we suppose the Magistrate, to be the first Recipient of Civil Power; yet his most immediate Capacity for ruling, will still result from some kind of Consent, or at least Submission of the People: So that Kings are not set up by Christ without their Subjects, but rather thro' his bringing them to submit themselves; whether in a more Formal Contract, or by an Interpretative Consent; and here the Generality are still suppos'd to conclude the rest. Our Lord would not longer continue *Judges* over his own People of old, when they insisted on having a *King*: And tho' they propos'd so ill a Pattern of Kingly Government, as that of the Nations; yet their own Choice was granted them, when the Manner of such a King laid before them, could not alter their Minds; *1 Sam. 8. 5, — 22.*

'TIS evident, there may be in Civil Government, what our Saviour doth not authorize or allow: His kind Office, and Gracious Inclination, is rather for the breaking every galling Yoak, and loosing

every grievous Burthen ; than for promoting any. *He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the Children of Men.* — *To turn aside the Right of a Man, — To subvert a Man in his Cause, the Lord approveth not :* Lam. 3. 33, &c. Tyrants and Slaves, as such, are no Creatures of God's making, tho' they may be of Man's : Yet all Regular Power and true Authority, tho' in bad Hands, is from God : Nor may *That* be resisted, or even *Those* who are invested with it ; whilst they go not to overturn Foundations, nor cease to be in the main, Ministers of God for Good ; such however to the Publick, as neither actually using, nor evidently designing *such* a way of Administration, as is like to do more Hurt, than Good.

BUT if there be any where such a sort of Rulers, as *Solomon* designs, under the Figure of a *Roaring Lion, and a Ranging Bear*, Prov. 28. 15. If there be Edicts, or Laws (so called) which are no way the Decrees of Justice, but rather Acts of Violence upon the Reason of the Law-giver, and Rights of the Subject ; such Rulers, and Laws are doubtless only permitted by the Son of God, as the Ministers, or Means of his just Vengeance

ance on thōe, who Break his Bands asunder, and cast away his Cords from them: Yet of his Mercy too, at the same time; To make them know his Reasonable Service, and the Intolerable Service of Arbitrary Power, 2 Chron. 12. 8. But 'tis a far differing Kind of Rulers and Laws, of which we speak, and under which we are, thro' the good Hand of God upon us. Now Civil Government decreeing or executing Justice is

1. By our Saviour's Purchase and Procurement: *The Prince of Peace* hath redeem'd the World from a state of perpetual War, which was like to have been the state of Nature, as deprav'd. For, *Whence come Wars and Fightings, but of Men's Lusts*, James 4. 1. But he hath made peace through the Blood of his Cross, as betwixt God and Man, so in some respects betwixt Man and Man; procuring that some be renew'd, and a Restraint inward or outward laid more generally upon all. And thus also, as in other respects, *He gave himself a Ransom for all*, 1 Tim. 2. 6. to deliver the World from Confusion, and the more Notorious Evil Works, that would have attended it, by the means of those *Kings, and Others in Authority*,

38 A SERMON for the

uthority, for whom the Apostle exhorts, that here be made not only Intercessions, but giving of Thanks, Ibid. v. 1, 2.

2. BY his Providential Disposal : He who Upholds all things by the Word of his Power, Heb. 1. 3. ordereth them also by his Infinite Wisdom. He turneth the wilderness into a standing-water, and dry-ground into water-springs, and there maketh the hungry to dwell, that they may prepare a City for habitation. Psalm 107. 35, 36. God is the Judge, he putteth down one and setteth upon another : (Not altogether without, but rather by Men) Psalm 75. 7. Nor doth he judge immediately by Himself, but by his Son ; for to him is all Judgment committed. He cast the Lot upon Saul, 1 Sam. 10. 21. He trained up, and preserved David for the Throne, inclin'd the People to call him to it, and upheld him on it. But of this the late Happy Revolution, and Present Government is a very singular, and sufficient Instance : For to whom so fitly, as to our Blessed Saviour, can we ascribe such a Scene of Merciful Providence, and Series of Deliverance ?

3. BY his Conduct and Aid : Whose is Counsel and sound Wisdom, who is Understanding

standing, and hath Strength. ver. 14. This Wisdom lays in the Principles of Honour, Equity and Prudence, whereby Princes are led to decree justice, and Kings to reign agreeably thereto. 'Tis not to be thought, that he who lighteth every Man, will leave those Rulers over Men in Darkness; at least, till they, or their Subjects have highly affronted that LIGHT, by sinning against their own; whether in neglecting, Counter-acting, or otherwise abusing it. Yet even in the dark, and by a sort of Principles, which fly the Light, this *Wisdom* can conduct, or over-rule them to many good purposes; and hath graciously put into many Governing Hands that inspired Statute-Book, which even the King was Oblig'd to Read in, all the Days of his Life; Deut. 17. 19. A Book, since that time, happily enlarg'd, and improv'd so as to afford, amongst the Proverbs and elsewhere, the best Foundations of the surest Policy: And tho' the Judicial Laws given to the Jews, are not, as such, binding upon us; yet certainly the Reasons thereof, wisely collected, and prudently apply'd, must be of admirable Use in other Civil Governments. And if this

Arts of Peace, even so low as the Skill of Artificers, (v. 19. with Exod. 28.13.) and Husbandman's Discretion, come forth from the Lord of Hosts, who is wonderful in Counsel, and excellent in Working; Isa. 28. 26, — 29. Certainly the due Management of just War must be also from him, who Taught David's hands to war, and his fingers to fight; Psal. 144. 1. who animated him to Run through a Troop, and leap over a Wall, Psal. 18. 29. Giving him the Conduct and Courage, which was needful against the insults of Enemies, and also Delivering him from the Privings of his own People, 2 Sam. 22. 44. which he was guided and enabled with great Manhood to sustain, and with no less Humanity to suppress. But most unquestionably, 'tis the Great Reformer who inspirits, counsels and assists about the Work of Reformation; as in the Instances of Asa and Jeboaphat, Hezekiah and Josiah: and even that Decree of Nebuchadnezzar, forbidding all his Subjects, under the severest Penalties to speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego; was confessedly drawn from him, by considering that God as a peerless Saviour,
 Because

Because (saith he) there is no other God
that can deliver after this sort, Dan. 3.

29.

4. *BY his Appointment and Authority*: It was the Redeemer of Israel, who said of Cyrus, *He is my Shepherd*; Isa. 44. 24, 28, who calls him *His Anointed*, Chap. 45. 1. and adds, v. 4. *I have even called thee by Name, I have surnamed thee* tho' thou ~~hast~~ not known me. Other Princes, unacquainted as Cyrus was with him, may yet really be his Commissioners, tho' less remarkably, as being for mere, common Purposes, and declared ~~such~~ only by the Consent or Submission of their People, not as he was by the Mouth of a Prophet. If all Judgment be committed to the Son, certainly righteous Kings and Judges of the Earth must act by his Authority, and are requir'd to do Homage to him, (Psalm 2. 10, 12,) and bound (upon the Notice of him) to Confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the Glory of God the Father, Phil. 2. 11. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, "that he might be Lord both of the dead, and living." Rom. 14. 9. And as there is no power but of God, Rom. 13. 1. so that of the Magistrate, by the

the Nature and Tendency thereof, must be thro' Ch^rist, as it is for the Temporal Safety and Happiness of Societies, and in Order to the Eternal Salvation of their particular Members, if they despise not the *Riches of Divine Goodness, Forbearance, and Long suffering*, (enjoy'd under good Government) which certainly lead to *Repentance*, Rom. 2. 4. and consequently to the escaping of Wrath to come, and obtaining *Salvation thro' our Lord Jesus Christ*. To him all Power is given in Heaven and in Earth, Mat. 28. 18, 19. So that he could send forth his Apostles into all Nations, as being only so many distinct Provinces of his Universal Empire, without asking leave of Civil Governours; who hold of Him all their Rightful Dominion, but on Terms exprest'd or reasonably suppos'd betwixt them and their Subjects, and by Him allow'd of; by Whom also they are authoriz'd, in what they regularly do; and are to Him accountable for their whole Administration: Yet may, by the actual or attempted Violation of the mentioned Terms, divest themselves of their Authority, and relax the Allegiance of their Subjects; who are otherwise

wise to Submit themselves to every Ordinance of Man for the Lord's sake ; whether it be to the King, as Supreme ; or unto Governors, as unto them that are sent by him ; for the Punishment of Evil-Doers, and for the Praise of them that do well. 1 Pet.

2. 13, 14.

AND now by way of Application.

I WOULD first take Occasion, from what I have been speaking, to deal more directly with the Minds and Principles of Men, for the promoting of Reformation. And shall therefore Address my Self

1. TO Atheists, or Persons inclin'd to deny, or doubt the Being of a God : After all that hath been said on this Point, sure it is not so much the Want or Weakness of Evidence for it ; as the Strength of Disinclination towards it (tho perhaps Unobserved by themselves) which makes Men call it in Question. But hath not God shewn himself to the World in a Way, which, duly attended, might at once sufficiently discover, and effectually recommend him to us, (as may be seen *Ps. 104, 105, 106, 107.* and in *Common as well as Sacred History.*)

Parti-

Particularly in that Illustrious Branch of Divine Providence, which relates to Civil Government, and especially in its Dependance on him, by whom *Kings reign, and Princes decree Justice*. For in putting down Oppressours, raising up Deliverers, working for and by them ; yea, in all good Government, who but must acknowledge the Hand of a God, most worthy to be *Lov'd*, as well as *Fear'd*. And was not that of *Psal. 118. 23.* the General Sense under our late Happy Revolution, *This is the Lord's doing, and marvellous in our Eyes?* How vain were it now to say, It was not the Work of a Superior Agent, because we know the Wheels, that carry'd it on ; yea, the very Weights and Springs moving those Wheels ? For who gave them singly their Form and Force, or put them so together ? Yet hath God been still more visibly, and graciously *manifest in the Flesh*, even in the Humané Nature of our Lord Jesus Christ, in his Doctrine, and Miracles, Life, Death and Resurrection, reported to us by a four-fold Testimony, separately given, in a History worthy of Credit, if any in the World.

IF after all, *The Fool will say in his heart,*

heart, there is no God; Psal. 14. 1. Sure, he must rather secretly wish, than really believe, what can never be evinc'd by weak Objections against the most forcible Arguments; nor can appear so much as possible to a Sober and Considerate Mind. And to such a one, how sad, how insupportable were the Thought, that there should be none sufficient to Counsel, Help, or Comfort us amidst the Difficulties, wherein we find our selves so often involv'd! What a forlorn, and contemptible Creature were Man, far more wretched than Brutes by his having Superior Faculties, if after all he must die like them. But some have made it, as they think, their Interest, there should be no God; and then come in time to make it their miserable Hope, there may be none. And we would even leave them, to make their best of that; were there not a far better *Hope set before us*, through our Lord Jesus Christ; and shall we not flee for *refuge to lay hold thereon*? What if we have daringly provok'd the most High; is he not yet thro' his Son reconcileable to Sinners? And shall they bear so irreconcileable a Mind towards him, that if

if they could have their choice, He should not be, from whom they have their Being? Is a God governing by Christ so inlufferable, that he must be excluded the Universe; or at least shut up in Heaven; as a kind of Prisoner to his Palace?

BUT the Reformation God by Christ designs, is that which grieves the Carnal Mind; and which it cannot bear. But would not this evidently make for the Health and Vigor of the Body, the soundness and Peace of the Mind, the Security and Improvement of the Temporal Estate? And if you pull down that Fence of Religion, which God hath set about our Rights and Properties; what will you substitute in its Place? Shall Civil Government be their Defence? But *this* without that Foundation is like to prove but as a bowing Wall, and as a tottering Fence; and may I not justly say, *That which ye build, if a Fox go up, he shall even break it down?* A little Brutal Subtilty, and Force, such as *their* God, the Belly, can inspire them with, *who glory in their shame*, will pass over all those Bounds, and trample upon Titular Gods, if there be not an Invisible, and Almighty Power

to

to defend them. This, Politicians have easily seen, and therefore have still declar'd for a Form of Religion at least: But, if the Shadow can serve some great and good Purposes; is not the Substance and Power much more desirable, as that which answers two Worlds at once? since Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come, 1 Tim. 4. 8.

2. To Deists, or such, as holding the Sufficiency of mere Natural Religion, do reject the Christian, and with that Divine Revelation in general: But is not the Course of Providence such a Counterpart of Sacred Writ, as may justly induce us to beleive, that he who principally acts in the one, does also chiefly speak in the other? And must we not, if we will shew our selves Men, own him for God, who has declar'd the End from the Beginning, and from antient Times the things, that are not yet done, saying my Counsel shall stand, and I will do all my Pleasure, Isa. 46. 8, 10. Now the Testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of Prophecy, Rev. 19. 10. Which hath long foretold the most Contingent Events, as in reference to Kings and Princes, so more espe

especially relating to him, by whom they rule. Who seems to be deny'd by some for no better Reason (tho' there may be other) than that they can (or thiak, they can) overthrow the Humane Explications of the Divine Trinity. But must we not in Matters even of a Mathematical Nature, admit one, or the other part as true, when yet both are loaded, not only with Insoluble Difficulties, but seeming Absurdities? And does not Humility, or even Reason it self require, that we pretend not *By searching to find out the Almighty to perfection: It is high as Heaven, what can we do? Deeper than Hell, what can we know? the Measure thereof longer than the Earth, and broader than the Sea, Job 11. 7, 8, 9.*

Methinks, at least the Evidence, we have for a Mediator betwixt God and Man, should be more than Sufficient; did we duly consider either Him, or Our selves. And sure it might be accounted a full-fall Saying, and worthy of all Acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the World to Save Sinners; tho' we could not add, of whom we are chief, 1 Tim. i. 15. were the Malignity of Sin, or Holiness of God but Justly apprehended. But, O

the

the daring and dangerous Confidence of guilty Men, who, when a fit and appointed Person offers and waits to introduce them, yet will needs by themselves alone, press into the more immediate Presence of their provoked Sovereign; and probably, not only with Enmity in their Hearts, but hostile Weapons in their Hands! Surely, they *know not* God, who do in some sort know, but yet *obey not* the *Gospel* of our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 Thes. 1. 8. They know not our God, as a *Consuming Fire*, or themselves, as *Briars and Thorns*, who will not take hold on his Strength, *that they may make their Peace with him*, Isa. 27.

Nor will they allow the Supreme Majesty to stand upon his Honour; when yet such Contemptible Creatures as we stand so highly upon ours, that we will not forgive, tho' willing to do it, without such Application made for the Offender; as may become our Place and Character. How unaccountable is it for any, in the clear Light of the *Gospel*, and under the Discovery of Jesus Christ, to flatter themselves with the anti-scriptural Expectation of absolute Mercy, till they run, as is to be fear'd, into the Hands of

of inexorable Justice ? Denying the Lord that bought them, and bringing upon themselves swift destruction, 2 Pet. 2. 1. Swift, in the terrible Surprize, with which it's like to come upon them, tho' in coming it appear to be slow; whilst God in Christ, is yet waiting to be Gracious. Let us Save our selves, at least, from this untoward Generation; which will not accept of Mercy, unless it may be had, without a Mediator, from the more immediate Hand of God's offended Majesty.

3. TO Christians in Name, who seem to mistake the Friend of Sinners for a Patron of Sin, and the perfect Law of Liberty for a Doctrine of Licentiousness: Wheras He, By whom Kings reign, and Princes decree Justice, appears in that very thing to be the Great Reformer of the World. So that the very Name of Christ, is a special Obligation upon us to Depart from Iniquity, 2 Tim. 2. 19. Allowing our selves in no Act of Injustice whatsoever towards God, or Man. We are not to imagine, that Wisdom hath found a way (for it were Folly indeed to attempt it) to save Men in their Sins; who might as easily be heal'd with their Diseases still upon them,

them, or fully set free with their Chains and Fetter about them. The Unreformed Lives of Protestants, are a publick Scandal to their Reformed Doctrine; and *Faith without Works* will serve indeed to condemn our Practice, but can never justify our Persons. Christians, that are such indeed, count not themselves *without Law to God, but under the Law to Christ*: 1 Cor. 9. 21. And the Gospel it self, if we take it, as fitly we may, for the entire Doctrine of our Salvation by Christ, has not only the Promises, but Precepts and Threatnings too of a Law; tho' it be indeed the *Law of the Spirit of Life, freeing us from the Law of Sin and Death*, Rom. 8. 2. Whilst it quickens us, for the cheerful and acceptable doing of what it requires. Let us not flatter our selves, as if we might live the safer in Sin, because Christ has dy'd to make *Reconciliation for Iniquity, and to bring in everlasting Righteousness*. No, the Death of our Saviour most strongly evinces, the former Destruction of Impenitent Sinners continuing in their Sins. For, if *Such things were done in that green Tree, what shall be done in the dry?* Luke 23. 31. *The Grace of God that bringeth Salvation,*

uation, teacheth us that denying Ungodli-
ness and Worldly Lusts, we should live so-
berly, righteously and godly in this present
World. So only Looking for that blessed
Hope, and the glorious appearing of the
great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ,
who gave himself for us, that he might re-
deem us from all Iniquity, &c. Tit. 2.

11, — 14. If any Man teach otherwise,
and consent not to wholesome Words, even
the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and
to the Doctrine, which is according to God-
liness, I would rather he should take his
Character from the Apostle, than from me;

1 Tim. 6. 3, 4. that, *He is proud, knowing
nothing, but doting about Questions, and Strifes
of Words; whereof cometh Envy, Strife, Rail-
ings, Evil Surmisings, &c.* Finally therefore,
*Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things
are honest, whatsoever things are just, what-
soever things are pure, whatsoever things
are lovely, whatsoever things are of good
report; if there be any Virtue, and if there
be any Praise, let us think on these things.*
*These let us do, and the God of Peace shall
be with Us here, nor shall we fail to be
ever with him above.* Phil. 4. 8, 9.

AND now could but such Points as
these, be more generally carri'd by per-
suasive

swasive Methods ; there would be far less need of Coercive Means. But alas ! both are little enough to carry on the Work of Reformation : And many who will not hear, or regard the Word from a despised Minister ; yet cannot but dread the Sword, or even Rod of a more awful Magistrate.

I SHALL therefore add somewhat farther, by way of *Application* ; with a more direct Eye to Civil Government.

HERE, might we not Observe the Allegiance due even from Kings and Princes to the Son of God, as the Reforming, Saving Wisdom ? Whom, indeed, *All Men should honour* ; even as they honour the Father : And he that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father, which hath sent him. John 5.

23. But those are more specially bound to do it, whom our Lord hath honour'd with Authority for the decreeing of Justice, or putting such Decrees in Execution. And how can they stand before him, as their Judge at last ; if they should not now regard him as their *Lawgiver* ? But either bury such a Talent by a slothful, careless, and treacherous Neglect ; or embezzle, and mispend it by serving a private Interest, instead of the Publick

Good. And this can never be effectually promoted, but in the way of Reformation. May the Wisdom, which hath so far enclin'd our King and Princes, and brought so many Private Subjects, to offer themselves willingly to so good a Work, *for ever keep it in the Imagination of the Thoughts of the Heart, both of Rulers and People ; preparing their Heart unto himself.* May all in Authority, as being duly sensible of their Dependance on him, ever Consult and Regard Him as their Oracle, that when they have long been safely, and happily guided by his Counsel ; he may afterward receive them to Glory.

AGAIN, May we not hence Collect, the high Esteem we ought to have of our Rulers and Laws, as being very valuable Gifts of our kind Redeemer, and serving to so great and desirable a Purpose, *That we may lead a quiet and peaceable Life in all Godliness and Honesty ?* How thankful should English men be for so happy a Constitution, rescu'd from Popery and Arbitrary Power in the present Establishment, introduc'd and maintain'd by successive Wonders, and those of a Saving Kind. Sure, none should be for Breaking these Bands, and casting away these

Coras

Cords from them; when they are indeed, the *Cords of a Man* obliging us to shew our selves Men, and the *Bands of Love*, wherewith Goodness it self would draw us to our unquestion'd Interest, and bind us to be Happy.

AND does not an Authority thus founded and establish'd, justly command our Submission and Obedience? The *Or-
dinance of God* in the hand of *Christ*, can-
not be resisted without an *Act* of the
most daring *Rebellion*, height'ned by
most egregious *Folly*, and odious *Ingra-
titude*. Certainly so bright a *Display* of
the *Reforming*, *Saving Wisdom* in refe-
rence to the present *Government*, and by
it, cannot be easily overlook'd, nor inno-
cently affronted, or despis'd. Let us then
readily *Submit* our selves for the *Lord's*
sake, with all *Thankfulness* to *God* and
Man, that we are not press'd to do it
in any way of *Opposition* to our highest
Lord, or of *Derogation* from him; but
for promoting the *Common Good*, and
our own *Felicity*.

BUT farther, Shall not Civil *Govern-
ment* under the *Reforming*, *Saving Wis-
dom* prevail to draw us into a yet closer
Union? 'Tis the *Singular Joy* of wise
and

and good Men, the Terrour of our Enem-
ies, and Glory of the present Establish-
ment, that it hath wrought so far this
Way : That we are by Law with held
from Biting, and Devouring one another ;
and that the just Apprehension of a Com-
mon Interest, and Duty hath, in the
Societies for Reformation, joined so many
of somewhat differing Measures in Reli-
gion. But yet it is for a *Lamentation*,
that there should be more generally found
amongst us the visible Marks of *Bitter
Envying and Strife in our Hearts* ; such as
Wrathful Debates, or mutual Estrange-
ment, *Backbitings*, *Whisperings*, and the
like. But are we not of the same Civil
Society, and should not Common Wis-
dom teach us kindly to treat one ano-
ther, who are continually needing each
other in the usual Occurrents of Life ;
and may, much more than we can now
imagine upon private or publick Emer-
gencies ? Are we not under the Govern-
ing Authority (O were we more under the
powerful Influence !) of that Wisdom,
who hath given it as a *New Command-
ment, that we love one another, even as he
has loved us ; that we also love one another :*
John 13. 34. Without this, the most
exact

exact Agreement in Doctrine, Worship, and Discipline, would be but as the Body of Unity, without the Soul. Which is then most commodiously lodg'd, when it can most freely exert its proper Acts, and best discharge incumbent Offices: And this must probably be in such a Constitution, as should be the more general Choice of Wise and Good Men, endow'd with the Genuine Spirit of Christian Charity, well weighing not only what they themselves could most desire, but also what might be fitly allow'd to others in the very Constitution it self. Which might seem sufficiently recommended by the Publick Countenance, and Support, with other Advantages; and that it may be safely, as well as charitably and justly attended with such Indulgence, as is now allow'd.

NOW the God of Patience and Consolation, grant us to be like minded one towards another, according to Christ Jesus; that we may with one Mind and one Mouth glorifie God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Rom. 15. 5, 6. And if in anything some be otherwise minded, may God reveal even this unto them. Nevertheless whereto we have already attained, let us walk

BUT that I may come at last to shut up the whole, with what lies yet nearer to the present Occasion: I shall turn my Discourse

1. *TO Offenders*: Who, being obnoxious to the Rulers and Laws, of which we speak, may be tempted to think hardly of them, and of the Agents under them for publick Reformation. But is not Malignity towards them, for their Designs and Endeavours to reclaim you, the hating of him much more, for whom they act, and the *Judging your selves un-
worthy of Eternal Life*, or even of a Temporal Safety and Happiness. Dare not then to *Hate him, who reproveth in the Gate*, nor such as bring thither your *evil Report*. I am not here calling you to *Love them, that hate you*; but only cautioning, you hate not them, who really love you: Not indeed with that dangerous Tenderness, you have for your selves, but to a far better purpose. Require them not to hate you in their *Hearts*, for so they must, did they not *rebuke you, but suffer sin upon you*; Lev. 19.

17. And how much better is their *open Rebuke, than that secret Love, (Prov. 27. 5.)* which will do nothing to better you; whenas these Societies are at no small Cost and Pains, suffer Loss and Reproach to do it?

BUT let me farther perswade you, not to lose what you suffer, or fear from the Government; but improve it to that Advantage, which will more than answer the Cost and Trouble. Think therefore oft and seriously, if it be a disquieting thing to lye daily obnoxious to Humane Laws, what is it to be continually liable to the Divine Wrath and Curse? I would hope few, or none are harden'd to a Resolution of being Confessors for Vice, and obstinately bearing what they must suffer for it, rather than forgoe it. Such were in the ready way sometime to become its Martyrs. And yet even those, who with publick Infamy, sacrifice their Lives to their Irregular Desires, do generally prove at last a sort of *Seb-pena'd Witnesses*, (as I may call them) against their own Evil Ways, which now they can see to have been their Sin and Folly: Tho' (alas!) their Dying Testimony is little regarded by the

the Living ; as if that of the Condemned were no more valid against themselves, than it is against others. But it is not Death 'tis only Shame, or Loss, or Pain you apprehend ; and if these can engage you to Caution, and reconcile you to some Degrees of Self Denial, should not the Dread of an Everlasting Confusion, Irreparable Damage and Insupportable Anguish, carry you on farther to the truly Christian Self-Denial ? Thereby you may approve your selves, not only to the Government and Laws, but to him, *Who searches the Heart, and tries the Reins ; and Who came not to call the Righteous, but Sinners to Repentance.*

2. TO the Neglecters or Deserters of good Rulers and Just Laws. Who leave them (as we commonly speak) to sink or swim, to shift as they can for themselves : Whilst they (in a far worse Sence than Gallio) Care for none of these things ; will not assist either in Person, or with their Estates, or by their Prayers : Nay, can scarce afford an encouraging Word or Look. Should any of these be Magistrates, entrusted with the Decrees of Justice, how faithless must they be to God and Man ? But if only Subjects, shall

shall We be a kind of Traytors to our King and Country, by neglecting what we might do to render them Safe and Happy? Is not our present Sovereign the Unanimous Choice of true *Englishmen*, and are not our Laws their Publick Voice? Shall this seem to be retracted, or that renounc'd?

BUT are you not the professed Subjects of Him, on whom such Rulers and Laws depend? Were you not baptiz'd into the Name of the Son the great Reformer; and can you studiously fly the Name of Reformers? Were you not then listed into his Service, against the World, the Flesh, and the Devil; and by that Sacrament, as a Military Oath, bound to Observe whatsoever Word of Command from the Captain of our Salvation? Now is not Love the *Royal*, and most Comprehensive *Law of Christ*; the Fulfilling even of the whole? But where is your Love to God, if you can so patiently hear his Name abus'd, see his Day profan'd, and suffer his Laws to be publick affronted? Or where the Love due to your Neighbour, if you can see him running headlong to Everlasting Destruction, without using the likelest Means

to

to stop and turn him? Say not that none of my Business: For certainly thou art much more bound to endeavour the saving of all within thy Reach, than the Son of God originally was, to attempt the Salvation of any. And he, who pretended an Exemption from being his Brother's Keeper, lay really under the Guilt of being at that very time his Murderer? Gen. 4.

YET some will still urge, they ought not to be Busy-Bodies in other Mens Matters: But certainly when thy Neighbour's House is on Fire, thou wilt count it thy own Business to inform others of it, and with them to help towards the quenching it thy self. Art thou not in Danger to suffer thro' the uncontroll'd Enormity of thy Neighbour? And what if the Son of God had so refus'd to concern himself with the Matters of us lost Men, where had been the Apostate Race of *Adam*?

O, But the Odious Name of an Informer is not to be born: What, not for his sake, who for the saving of us was content to be Number'd with the greatest Transgressors? But indeed, with like Truth, Justice, and Gratitude, as they can be call'd, in the scandalous Sence, Informers, who

who are not unreasonably driving any
besides, or against their Judgment and
Conscience, and so upon Temporal or
Eternal Ruine; but endeavouring to re-
cover Men from those Foolish and Hurt-
ful Lusts which would drown them in Per-
dition. But if indeed, we are ashamed
of our Lord, and of his Service, what
can we expect but that he shall be
ashamed of us, when he shall come in his
own Glory, and in his Fathers, and that
of the Holy Angels. Luke 9. 26. Or, if
afraid and dare not trust God with our
Name and Interest; in the way of our
Duty, know we not, that the Fearful
and Unbelieving lead the Black List of
those, who are doom'd to *Have their*
part in the Lake which burneth with Fire
and Brimstone? Rev. 21. 8. But if indeed
thy Heart be with those, against whom
thy Hand should be; how justly mayst
thou look to take thy Lot with them
at last? When 'tis the Language of thy
Practice, *Let Barabbas be spar'd, tho' Je-*
sus be crucify'd. But may we not hope,
that more both of the Governors and
People shall offer themselves willingly, when
so many have already done it. And to
such I lastly turn my self. Therefore,

3. *To the Societies for Reformation:*
Your regular Subservience to good Rulers and just Laws, must be doubtless the serving of Him, By whom Kings reign, and Princes decree Justice. In which you have what may seem a Virtual Commission from the King, in his Royal Proclamation *To all whom it may concern;* and sure, it concerns every Subject to stand up in his Place, for the Government and Laws, *against those Evil-Doers and Workers of Iniquity,* who, in breaking these, are subverting that. Nor can your Service be less pleasing, for its being more free. You have in effect the Call, tho' not the formal Command, of Kings and Princes together, in their *Decrees of Justice* against Profaneness and Immorality: For do they not plainly invite those Offices of yours, to which they have thought fit to annex a Reward? Yet cannot but highly approve your Prudent, Generous, and Charitable Applying it, rather to the Relief of the Poor, than to the answering your own unavoidable Experie. You have the Published Concurrence, and High Ecomium, of our Ecclesiastical Princes, (the Right Reverend Bishops) together with Nobles and

and I will Arch my I pass by all the
States of the Land and their reported
Chargers the promising of Restitution
a young and forward boy. All the Dukes
of the Earth you who duly minister Justice
The Heirs of Good Men unity
where I stand with you. The Conference
of the Both Worlds for you, the first
of your own may comfort you now by
the way; minister of your Lord shall
crown you in the End. When he left
Angels and Men. He shall openly say,
Men who are Good and Faithful Servants,
and have been faithful over a few things,
shall be made over many things
therefore unto the joy of your Lord: And
when in this world you cannot fail, if in
the next where is the highest Responce
believe you do reflect the Reward of
Christ greater Measures; when the Right
and wrong are having respect to the
measures of Reward. This that you
may more readily do, has been much
of my Delight in the choice of this Sub-
ject, and shall be my Prayer for you con-
tinually, that lovin. serving your King and
Country, you may be accepted by the
King of Kings. I beseech you to be
dignified

THIS Agents you are, his Work to be
carry on, this Nobles Work, the Work
of Mercy, that is, executing the Precepts
of Justice. Mercy to the Poor, whom
which, in *the Phisick* (but in a gentle
Method) you are turning away the Di-
vine Wrath and Vengeance of Mercy on the
Poor, whom you bountifully relieve, not
only with their proper Portion, but even
with your own; and finally Mercy to
Offenders themselves, whom you are
endeavouring to save, whilst, with a
Fear, they are capable of feeling, you lab-
our to *pluck them out* of the Fire, which
would consume their Bodies and
Estates: and would more rejoice if you
might prevail to save them from the un-
quenchable Fire and Escalfling Burn-
ings. O Let your Prayers to God in
Christ, ever accompany your other De-
votions for so Christian a Purpose.

IT IS under the Reformatting, Saving
Wisdom in itself you act: Thence seek,
and take your Measures, even those
of the *Wisdom* from above, which is first
pure, then peaceable, gentle and soft, to be in-
sensibly full of Mercy, and good Fruits,
without *Pomp*, and *riches*, *Hypocrisie*,
James 3. 17. Thence fetch Courage and
CH. Strength

Strength for your difficult Work, and
him look for your Assurance, and from
him comfort. But if you do not have
such a comforter, then you will be
in danger, but the
Love of him who goes with you to the
way of Reincarnation in the next of the
path of Truth, and doubt not, but
that will be eternal to inhabit
such a Yogic body.

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